

FAQs on Political Activities by 162nd Fighter Wing Members

As Election Day 2012 approaches, now is a good time to review guidance related to political activity by Air National Guard members. While all military and civilian members are encouraged to register and vote as they choose, there are restrictions on political activities designed to ensure the military remains a politically neutral establishment. While some restrictions apply to all Guard members, there are differences between the rules related to full-time military members, drill status Guardsmen, and civilian employees.

What is partisan political activity? Partisan political activity supports or relates to candidates representing, or issues identified with, national or State political parties. It includes activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party or candidate for partisan political office. Activities like volunteering for a candidate's campaign, distributing campaign literature, and making campaign contributions are considered partisan political activity.

What restrictions apply to all ANG members? Members can never engage in political activity on the job, in a government vehicle, or while wearing an official uniform. This includes activities such as handing out political literature at work and sending or forwarding emails related to partisan candidates or positions over government email.

What rules apply to military members? Active duty military members (including Title 10 and full time National Guard) are covered by DoDD 1344.10 and AFI 51-902. These members may:

- Express personal opinions as individual citizens on candidates and issues
- Attend partisan political meetings or rallies but only as spectators and not in uniform
- Make campaign contributions to political parties and organizations
- Display political stickers on private vehicles and wear political buttons when not in uniform

Active duty military members may not:

- Engage in any political activities while in uniform
- Attend, as an official Guard representative, partisan political events, even without actively participating
- Make campaign contributions to a particular partisan candidate
- Participate in partisan political fundraising activities or rallies, whether in uniform or not
- Display a large political sign, banner or poster on a private vehicle

The activities of drill status Guardsmen are unrestricted when they are not in military status, provided they participate out of uniform and do not act in a manner that could reasonably lead to an inference or appearance that the military sponsors or endorses a particular partisan candidate or position.

What rules apply to civilian employees? Federal civilian employees, including technicians not in military status, are covered by a law called the Hatch Act. Permissible off-duty activities for these employees include:

- Placing a political sign or banner in their private yard and placing a bumper sticker on a privately owned vehicle
- Making monetary contributions to any candidate or political party and campaigning for or against candidates
- Attending political rallies and fundraisers and giving speeches

Civilian employees may not:

- Use their official title or position while engaged in political activity
- Display campaign photos, political posters, T-shirts, or campaign buttons in a government office or common area
- Host or invite others to a political fundraiser, or solicit funds at any other fundraiser for a partisan candidate

These lists are not all-inclusive and the rules can be complex. The bottom line is that all members of the 162nd Fighter Wing should steer clear of any activity that may be reasonably viewed as directly or indirectly associating the military with a partisan political activity. For more information on civilian employee restrictions, go to <http://www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm>. Military members can review the applicable Department of Defense Directive and Air Force Instruction. The legal office can also provide more detailed information at 295-6525.